

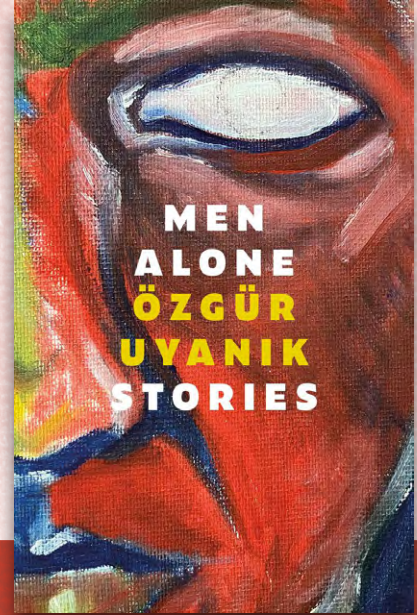
Each month we will focus on an inspiring author based in or writing about Wales! You'll have an introduction to their latest book, what inspires them to write, and any advice they have for young writers!

Get to know

Özgür Uyanık



Özgür spent his formative years in London after his family emigrated from Türkiye in 1980, and now lives in Cardiff. With a background in the UK film industry and a few years of directing commercials in İstanbul, he transitioned to the realm of literature while continuing to work on his film projects. In 2020, his first novel *Conception*, a darkly comedic satire that delves into the intricacies of the contemporary art world, was published. That year he also won the Criminally Good Crime Writing Competition at the Essex Book Festival and was a contributing co-editor for an anthology of essays by underrepresented writers. His short stories, essays and book reviews have been published in the UK since 2017. *Men Alone* is Özgür's debut collection of short stories.



Summary:

From Özgür Uyanık, novelist and film director, comes a debut collection of audacious, darkly wry and compassionate short stories. *Men Alone* is a meditative vision from a unique voice that explores the many – often confounding – permutations of modern masculinity. Driven by universal themes of desire, mortality, loss and

yearning, each story evokes both the melancholy and the hope inherent in all stages of life, from childhood through to maturity. Artists, writers, lovers, killers: all types of men walk these pages, along the streets of Cardiff, İstanbul, London, Paris, Odesa and Lisbon. All seeking to find a way to belong in the world.

Tell us a little about your background...

I was born in Türkiye's capital city Ankara, but soon found myself in London by way of İstanbul and Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. My architect parents followed the work and we – my sister and I – went with them, naturally. We were thrown into the British primary school system without a word of English between us and had to learn fast and adjust to an alien culture. Flash forward a few years and I was in Canterbury getting a BA in Communications and Image Studies, then later an English literature and creative writing MA from Cardiff Metropolitan University and currently I'm working on a creative writing PhD at Cardiff university about othering the self in my screenwriting practice.

What influences and memories stand out from your childhood?

I grew up with a camera glued to my eye from the age of about twelve thanks to my mum's interest in photography and my own obsession with cinema. Growing up I remember staring at ceilings a lot, drawing, learning to programme my ZX Spectrum, building remote-controlled car kits, and reading about dinosaurs, history, and space exploration. I prefer to forget the bad memories – or at least try not to ruminate on them – but they end up resurfacing in the work, so I suppose personal trauma is the biggest influence on anything I produce, creatively speaking.

When did you become aware of wanting to write, did any particular factors play a part?

I enjoyed writing essays and short stories in school and seemed to have a knack for it and, after falling in love with cinema, I wrote screenplays almost exclusively for a while, both shorts and features. Film-making was too expensive to pursue full-time, however, so I pivoted towards prose and rediscovered a passion for the medium of the novel as well as the short story form, but I am still trying to keep the screenwriting going too. The main factor for wanting to write has always been the efficiency of the process of mind-to-pen (or, keyboard) – I used to draw to express myself as a child, and then words took over, I guess; there's something magical about investigating the self through writing and a timeless quality about communicating through fiction that I find compelling.

What experiences of libraries have influenced you during your lifetime?

I'll never forget the small local library near our family home in Wandsworth that served as a sanctuary of learning and the sadness I felt upon revisiting the area to find that it had closed. I continue to value libraries as precious human spaces that I often use to align myself with the nourishing sense of communal reading. The invisible energy generated by humans reading together, even though they are magically in their own worlds, is invaluable for anyone and not just writers or students.

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on the website libraries.wales